

Projects & Project Management in Germany



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The German Project Management Association (GPM) hosted the **1st IPMA Research Conference** 26 through 28 November in Berlin. About 80 people from 22 countries attended this conference dedicated to the topic of “Theory meets practice in projects”.

The distinctive feature of this conference was the intensive dialogue between theory and practice which can neither be found at scientific conferences nor at professional conferences. Practitioners were encouraged to share their experiences in practice together with requirements to researchers, who shared their knowledge of theoretical foundations for managing projects in various contexts.



Source (Les Squire)

During the first two days of the conference a joint Special Interest Group (SIG) of GPM and the swiss project management association (spm) on “new perspectives on project-related work) presented the results of a three years research program. They started to explain the finding on the increasing tension between projects and a base organisation. Some aspects were put into scene by an improvisation theatre, demonstrating the three difficulties and ways to overcome them. Besides organisation theory also psychology and network theory were high-lighted. Another issue was uncertainty in projects. Many projects suffer from that uncertainty. Project managers tend to perceive uncertainty as threat to their projects and try to overcome it by increasing planning and controlling. Often this does not help. New approaches were discussed using story-telling and a few case studies.

A framework for bridging theory and practice in projects was presented by the SIG using the analogy of a map with two distinct worlds “world of theories” and “world of practice”. It was demonstrated on the map how difficult it is for project managers to overcome the mental models of PM methodologies and traditional ways of thinking. The participants were split in two groups, one covering the “world of theories” and one the “world of practice”. People from the latter were asked to resolve a typical problem out of their world by asking the other participants, what theory could offer. A dynamic exchange started which showed, that “translation” is needed between the two worlds. Practice needs to care more for the rich findings of research, whilst the researchers need to care more for the real challenges and questions the practitioners are faced with. Maybe special facilitators or consultants could help to overcome this gap or at least help to improve the understanding between the both worlds. More meetings between research and practice, like this IPMA Research Conference, are desperately needed.

A social program showed the highlights of Berlin, a recently opened Christmas market, the Brandenburg Gate and many other places. The participants also enjoyed a special dish of Berlin, a “Curry Wurst”, that is a sausage with a spicy tomato sauce together with French fries (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Currywurst>).



(Source: Reinhard Wagner)

The goal for the third day was to initiate an international network of researchers being active in the field of project management. The participants discussed in a World Café setting (www.theworldcafe.com) their current research topics, emerging trends for managing projects, programs and portfolios as well as the need of practitioners. Amongst those topics were the image and value of project management, uncertainty in projects (e.g. resilience), organisational and individual competences (e.g. meta competences) and a knowledge friendly environment. Several groups were newly formed which will meet on their own, with support of **IPMA Research Management Board** (<http://ipma.ch/research/contact-research/>) or the GPM Research Council.

The participants highly appreciated this interactive format and looking forward to the next event. During the next **IPMA World Congress** (<http://www.ipma2014.com/>) three streams are dedicated to research topics. The theme: “Innovation through dialogue”. It will be held in Rotterdam from September 29th to October 1st in the City of Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Early summer, IPMA will organize an event in the Middle East and end of next year in China. Both events will focus on bridging theory and practice in projects.

During the 1. IPMA Research Conference the prestigious **IPMA Research Award** was handed to Prof. Dr. Hans-Georg Gemünden (TU Berlin) and Prof. Dr. Alexander Kock (TU Darmstadt) for their work on the “Management of Complex Project Landscapes”. Prof. Dr. Martina Huemann (Director of IPMA Research Awards) and Reinhard Wagner, IPMA Vice President for Research congratulated both awardees and encouraged them to continue with their outstanding work.



Source (Les Squire)

About the Author



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Reinhard Wagner is an International Correspondent for **PM World Journal** in Germany. He is also CEO of Projektivisten GmbH, a service provider specialized in the field of project management. He studied Electrical Engineering and Business Administration in Germany and the USA and looks back to more than 27 years of project related work and leadership experience. His career started in the German Air Force, where he served as Air Surveillance Officer in NATO Air Defense performing projects like the establishment of a Systems Operations Center. 1995 he entered the Automotive Industry and managed several major design projects and programmes, developed specific methodology for Automotive Engineering activities and published the first book on Project Management in Automotive Industry. In 2002 he founded a Special Interest Group for Automotive Project Management within GPM German Project Management Association and leads these activities since then. In 2006 he entered the Executive Board of GPM being responsible for all R&E activities as well as the International affairs. Today he is Chairman of the Executive Board. As Chairman of the respective DIN committee for the development of PM standards he is responsible for several standardization projects in Germany. From 2007 until 2012 he acted as working group Convenor in ISO for the development of ISO 21500 Guidance on Project Management. Within GPM and IPMA, he developed tools for the assessment and certification of organisations (e.g. GPM3 and IPMA Delta) and acts as Lead Assessor for PM-ZERT and IPMA in this field. Reinhard Wagner teaches project management at different Universities in Germany. He has published more than 150 books and articles, speaks to national and international audiences and is elected as IPMA Vice President for R&D / Awards. Reinhard is living close to Munich, Bavaria and can be contacted via r.wagner@gpm-ipma.de.